

Fifty Years Old

K. E. G.

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EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

FIFTY YEARS OLD

In April, 1942, the Iowa Department of History and Archives will observe the semi-centennial of its founding, April 8, 1892. During the week of April 5-11 a series of special observances and programs will be offered to the public of Iowa, and the nation generally, which will suitably mark that important milestone in the history of this Department. In each and all of these occasions the public is cordially invited to join.

In 1892, Charles Aldrich, a veteran newspaper publisher who came to Iowa from New York in the mid 1850's and grew up with the northwestern section of the state, a veteran public official, a keen and active observer in the Civil War, and widely known throughout the state for his long interest in things historical, at last achieved his dream of many years, when there was established by legislative enactment an "Iowa Department of History."

There is much for which one can be proud in the record of this short half-century.

From the nucleus of just an autograph collection, from the two small wooden cases which originally housed them in the southwestern corner of the state house basement, from a staff of one, the Department has grown to five full blown divisions, to a crowded display on four floors, to a fine house of Iowa Limestone, to a working force of twenty employees.

But growth, like the physical progress which marks the fifty-year life of this Department, came not by accident or chance. It is largely the result of someone's planning, someone's devoted work. The Department has been blessed throughout all its life with earnest, sincere, imaginative Curators. Charles Aldrich's grasp of the future of the De-

partment, his early insistence upon preserving the rich cultural heritages of Iowa—which in 1892 were nowhere being protected—his understanding of the values of official documents, these and more, all draw respect from the historians of the present day. Under his sixteen year administration the nucleus of the whole Department took form: the Iowa newspaper collection—the choicest of the whole middle west, the manuscript collection of Iowa men and women—the outgrowth of his autograph collection, *THE ANNALS OF IOWA*, the museum, the library, and, in 1906, the public archives, all came into being during that span of time.

Succeeding Mr. Aldrich came Edgar R. Harlan, who served his apprenticeship under the former. Possessed of a natural curiosity and a hard driving energy, Mr. Harlan built well upon the framework left him by his predecessor. Collections of museum riches, the stagecoach, the monster conestoga wagon, the wealth of Indian material, many choice examples of natural history, much of all this came in the administration of E. R. Harlan.

In his short two years in the Department succeeding Mr. Harlan, O. E. Klingaman demonstrated an equal devotion to the responsibilities of this institution to the State of Iowa. The present curator, Ora Williams, is, like Mr. Aldrich, a veteran newspaper man of many years standing, possessing a close and intimate acquaintance with many of the forging forces of our recent history, close to the lives of industrialists, managers, and statesmen during the years. He brings to the Department the same sincere solicitous and imaginative concern so characteristic of those before him.

But an institution is more than a roster of its men, more than a list of its divisions. It is most of all its services. While much has been done for the state of Iowa in stimulating a consciousness of the wealth of its own cultural and historical past through publication in *THE ANNALS*, lectures, and the eloquence of silent historical exhibits, on the occasion of the Semi-centennial this Department pledges an increasingly effective concern in serving the remotest village in Iowa as well as the closest neighbor. The Department furthermore pledges to exercise as much interest in

preserving the history that is being made as in that which has been accomplished. It is our hope that many will join in both pledges.

In the various observances which will make up the celebration of the semi-centennial detailed programs will be announced from time to time. The climax of the celebration will be in the week April 5-11.

K. E. G.

LET'S KEEP A DIARY!

Almost every one of us has, at some time in our lives, kept a diary. In most instances the diary was soon abandoned when the initial enthusiasm died and the first obstacles arose to its continuance. Yet although we smile indulgently when admitting it in public, still most of us remember with pleasure our experience as a diarist.

Too long, however, we have relegated the keeping of diaries to the young, the immature, the sentimentalists, or classed it among those things we would like to do, but "just have not got around to doing yet." Moreover, for too long too many of us have felt that keeping a diary was akin to an unwarranted conceit, that one's thoughts and opinions were worth the keeping. Fundamentally we all think so, but we have hesitated to declare it in the overt act of starting a diary.

The editor believes, very strenuously, that if what one does is worth doing, then it also is worth making a note of, especially of what one thinks. For those who place a humble estimate upon their role in life, let them remember that history is more and more recognizing that it is the complex problems of the common man and his society that makes up much of the complicated whole. Besides, as Lincoln might have phrased it, the Lord surely loved the common man, for he made so many of them.

Keeping a diary is no juvenile whim, no immature enthusiast's fancy. On the contrary, keeping a diary should

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